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SKETCHES OF WAR FROM ONE OF ITS AGENTS.

A little book, under the title of *Thirty Years from Home, or a Voice from the Main Deck*, was published last summer in this city, containing some truthful and vivid sketches of life on the ocean in ships of war. The author, Samuel Leech, appears now to be a member of the Methodist church, and is fully commended to our confidence as a man of strict veracity. The book is an autobiography, a sketch of the author's life, especially on board of several men-of-war, and full of interesting incidents related with much simplicity and vivacity. It possesses many of the charms that belong to a novel; and for the gratification of our readers, we shall lay it under contribution, now and hereafter, to the cause of peace.

WHAT TEMPTS BOYS TO BECOME SEAMEN.—“I had heard tales of the sea from my cousins; my mother had filled my mind with the exploits of my grandfather; my imagination painted a life on the great deep in the most glowing colors; my mind grew uneasy; every day, my ordinary pursuits became more and more irksome, and I was continually talking about going to sea; indeed, I had made myself unhappy by being so discontented.

Little do lads and young men know of the difference between the comfort of a parent's roof, and the indifference, unkindness, and trouble they invariably experience, who go out into the world, until they have made the experiment. They paint every thing in bright colors; they fancy the future to be all sunshine, all sweets, all flowers, but are sure to be wofully disappointed, when once away from the fireside of their infancy. Let me advise young people, if they wish to escape hardships, to be contented to remain quietly at home, abiding the openings of Providence, obeying the wishes of their parents, who do not only have their best good at heart, but, however they may think to the contrary, who actually know what is most for their advantage.

My passion for a seaman's life was not a little increased by a soldier, who was sergeant to a company in Lord Francis Spencer's regiment of cavalry. Seated by my father's hearth-side, this old soldier, who had once been a sailor, would beguile many an evening hour with his endless tale, while I sat listening in enrapt attention. My mother, too, heedlessly fanned the flame by her descriptions of the noble ships she had seen when at Brighton. Besides this, a footman at Blenheim House used to sing a song called “the poor little sailor boy;” which, although somewhat gloomy in its descriptions, only served to heighten the flame of desire within me, until I could think of nothing else, day or night, but of going to sea.”

THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.—“The morning after my arrival, I was put into a ‘mess.’ The crew of a man of war is divided into little communities of about eight, called ‘messes.’ These eat and drink together, and are, as it were, so many families. The mess to which I was introduced, was composed of your genuine, weather-beaten old tars. But for one of its members, it would have suited me very well; this one, a real gruff old ‘bull-dog,’ named Hudson, took it into his head to hate me at first sight.

This unkindness from the brutal Hudson rather chilled my enthusiasm. The crew, too, by some means had an impression that my mother had brought me on board to get rid of me, and therefore bestowed their bitterest curses on her in the most profuse manner imaginable. Swearing I had heard before, but never such as I heard there. Nor was this all; in performing the work assigned me, which consisted in helping the seamen take in provisions, powder, shot, &c., I felt the insults and tyranny of the midshipmen. These little minions of power ordered and drove me round like a dog, nor did I and the other boys dare interpose a word. They were

officers; their word was our law, and wo betide the presumptuous boy that dared refuse implicit obedience.

These things reminded me of what had been said to me of the hardships of sea life in a man-of-war. I began to wish myself back in my father's house at Bladen. This, however, was impossible, and to add to my discouragement they told me I was entered on the ship's books for life. Dreary prospect! I felt more than half disposed, as I went to my tasks, to use the language of the Irishman, as sung by my shipmates. Tempted and beguiled while intoxicated, he had enlisted for a soldier, but found the sergeant at the *recruiting office* and the sergeant on the *drill-field* very different personages. He is hence made to say,

‘It was early next morning to drill I was sent,
And its och to my soul! I began to lament;
Cannot you be aisy, and let me alone?
Don't you see I've got arms, legs, and feet of my own?’”

A GLIMPSE AT A MAN-OF-WAR.—“A vessel of war contains a little community of human beings, isolated, for the time being, from the rest of mankind. This community is governed by laws peculiar to itself; it is arranged and divided in a manner suitable to its circumstances. Hence, when its members first come together, each one is assigned his respective station and duty. For every task, from getting up the anchor to unbending the sails, aloft and below, at the mess-tub or in the hammock, each task has its man, and each man his place. A ship contains a set of *human machinery*, in which every man is a wheel, a band, or a crank, all moving with wonderful regularity and precision to the *will* of its machinist—the all-powerful captain.

The boatswain is a petty officer, of considerable importance in his way; he and his mates carry a small silver whistle or pipe, suspended from the neck by a small cord. He receives word from the officer of the watch to call the hands up. You immediately hear a sharp, shrill whistle; this is succeeded by another and another from his mates. Then follows his hoarse, rough cry of ‘All hands ahoy!’ which is forthwith repeated by his mates. Scarcely has this sound died upon the ear, before the cry of ‘Up all hammocks ahoy!’ succeeds it, to be repeated in like manner. As the first tones of the whistle penetrate between decks, signs of life make their appearance. Rough, uncouth forms are seen tumbling out of their hammocks on all sides, and before its last sounds have died upon the air, the whole company of sleepers are hurriedly preparing for the duties of the day. No delay is permitted; for as soon as the before-mentioned officers have uttered their imperative commands, they run below, each armed with a rope’s end, with which they labor the shoulders of any luckless wight upon whose eyes sleep yet hangs heavily, or whose slow-moving limbs show him to be but half awake.

A similar rapidity attends the performance of every duty. The word of command is given in the same manner, and its prompt obedience enforced by the same unceremonious rope’s-end. To skulk is therefore next to impossible; the least tardiness is rebuked by the cry of ‘Hurrah, my hearty! bear a hand! heave along! heave along!’ This system of driving is far from being agreeable; it perpetually reminds you of your want of liberty; it makes you feel sometimes as if the hardest crust, the most ragged garments, with the freedom of your own native hills, would be preferable to John Bull’s ‘beef and duff,’ joined as it is with the rope’s-end of the driving boatswain.

We had one poor fellow, an Irishman, named Billy Garvy, who felt very uneasy and unhappy. He was the victim of that mortifying system of impressment, prevalent in Great Britain in time of war. He came on board perfectly unacquainted with the mysteries of sea life. One of his first inquiries was, where he should find his bed, supposing they slept on

shipboard on beds the same as on shore. His messmates, with true sailor roguishness, sent him to the boatswain. 'And where shall I find a bed, sir?' asked he of this rugged son of the ocean.

The boatswain looked at him very contemptuously for a moment, then, rolling his lump of tobacco into another apartment of his ample mouth, replied, 'Have you got a knife?' 'Yes, sir.' Well, stick it into the softest plank in the ship, and take that for a bed!'

Poor fellow! what was sport for others, was pain to him. He had been used to kind treatment at home. After he had received his hammock, when turning out in the morning, with the boatswain's mates at his heels, he used to exclaim, 'When I was at home, I would walk in my father's garden in the morning, until the maid would come and say, "William, will you come to your ta, or your coffee ta, or your chocolarata?"' But O! the case is altered now; it's nothing but bear a hand, lash and carry. Oh dear!'

TREATMENT OF SEAMEN.—"With my return to active life, came my exposure to hardships, and, what I dreaded still more, to punishment. Some of the boys were to be punished on the main deck; the rest were ordered forward to witness it, as usual. Being so far aft that I could not hear the summons, as a matter of course, I remained at my post. The hawk-eye of the lieutenant missed me, and in a rage he ordered me to be sent for to receive a flogging for my absence. Excuse was vain; for, such was the fiendish temper of this brutal officer, he only wanted the shadow of a reason for dragging the poor helpless boys of his charge to the grating. While I stood in trembling expectation of being degraded by the hated cat, a summons from the captain providentially called off our *brave* boy-flogger, and I escaped. The *offence* was never mentioned afterwards. The reader can easily perceive how such a constant exposure to the lash must embitter a seaman's life.

At Plymouth we had some vague rumors of a declaration of war against America. More than this, we could not learn, since the utmost care was taken to prevent our being fully informed. The reason of this secrecy was, probably, because we had several Americans in our crew, most of whom were pressed men, as before stated. These men, had they been certain that war had broken out, would have given themselves up as prisoners of war, and claimed exemption from that unjust service, which compelled them to act with the enemies of their country. This was a privilege which the magnanimity of our officers ought to have offered them. They had already perpetrated a grievous wrong upon them in impressing them; it was adding cruelty to injustice, to compel their service in a war against their own nation. But the difficulty with naval officers is, that they do not treat with a sailor as with a *man*. They know what is fitting between each other as officers; but they treat their crews on another principle; they are apt to look at them as pieces of living mechanism, born to serve, to obey their orders, and administer to their wishes without complaint. This is alike a bad morality and a bad philosophy. There is often more real manhood in the forecastle than in the ward-room; and until the common sailor is treated as a *man*, until every feeling of human nature is conceded to him in the naval discipline, perfect, rational subordination will never be attained in ships of war, or in merchant vessels. It is needless to tell of the intellectual degradation of the mass of seamen.

While in this port, I had to throw myself on the protection of the officers, to avoid the disposition to abuse which existed in one of the petty officers. Several of these gentlemen, who messed together, had a large boy to wait on them. He was unacquainted with naval usages, and somewhat awkward withal. This led them to oppress him: they frequently knocked him round, and even ventured to flog him with a rope's-end. The poor lad used to cry, and fret about it, leading quite a miserable life. By some means, it happened that I was ordered to take his place; and I determined to resist

their habit of punishing their servant; so, one day, when the gunner came below for his share of the whisky, and found it was gone, his messmates having drank the whole, and asked me for his whisky, I boldly answered, 'I know nothing about it.' At this, he broke out into a furious passion, declaring that if I did not find his whisky, he would have my *heart's blood*. To this *dignified* and *manly* threat, I made no reply, but proceeded forthwith to the first lieutenant, and laid the facts before him. The gunner was sent for, and reprimanded, and threatened with degradation, if ever he either struck or offered to strike me again. Of course, I had no further trouble with these would-be tyrants.

Our captain soon gave us a specimen of his character in a most illegal act of punishment. We lay along side the Hornet or Peacock, I forget which. It happened that her captain and most of her officers were gone ashore one day. Our captain accidentally saw one of her men engaged in some act of misconduct: instead of entering a complaint against the man to his own officers, he ordered him to be seized up and severely flogged, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of the offender for pardon. Why the captain of that vessel did not call Captain Porter to an account for this manifest invasion of his prerogatives, I never knew, for we put to sea shortly afterwards. An officer who would thus gratuitously volunteer his services to punish a man, must be a tyrant at heart. So at least we thought; while many misgivings, concerning the future, troubled our minds.

As I was now rated an ordinary seamen, and not a boy, as heretofore, I had a station assigned me in the fore-top, instead of being a servant to any of the officers. I was also appointed to be one of the crew of the captain's gig. This made my lot one of more fatigue and exposure than in any former voyage; a proof of which, I very soon experienced. It being now late in the fall, the weather became very cold. One afternoon, the pennant having got foul of the royal mast, an officer ordered me to go up and clear it. I had no mittens on; it took me some time to perform my task, and before I came down one of my fingers was frozen. Thus it is, however, with the poor tar; and he thinks himself happy to escape his dangers with injuries so slight as this.

The disposition of our commanding officer was still further revealed to my discomfort one day, while we were at work on the cables. Something I did, not happening to suit him, he gave me a severe blow on the head with his fist, not far from the place where I had been previously injured by the malice of the Malay boy. This unmanly blow occasioned me violent pains for several days.

An instance of our commander's tyranny occurred while we were ascending the river. He had requested a seaman, named Daily, who was somewhat acquainted with the river, to act as pilot. By accident or negligence, he suffered the brig to strike the bottom, though without the least injury. The captain flew into a passion, ordered him to the gangway, and commanded the boatswain's mate to lay on with the rope's-end. I did not witness this flogging, for the hands were not called up to witness punishment, unless administered by the cat-o'-nine-tails; but one of my messmates said that he received at least one hundred lashes. I saw him several days afterwards, with his back looking as if it had been roasted, and he unable to stand upright. He wore the same shirt in which he was flogged for some time afterwards. It was torn to rags, and showed the state of his back beneath. His object in wearing it was to mortify and shame the captain for his brutality.

The severity of flogging with the rope's-end is justly described in Mr. Dana's excellent book, called 'Two Years before the Mast.' Though not so cruel as the cat, it is nevertheless a harsh, degrading punishment. Our men used to say that 'they would as lief be cut up on the bare back with the cat, as have back and shirt cut up together, as was poor Daily's.' In truth, that flogging was both unjust and illegal. The articles of war

provide, that not more than *twelve* lashes shall be given for a crime; but here *one hundred* were inflicted for *no crime*—for an accident, which might have happened to the best pilot who ever ascended the Mississippi. But though the captain was thus rendered amenable to the law, who would believe a poor sailor? Had he complained, it would doubtless have been to his own injury; for law, and especially naval law, is always on the side of the strong. This was not the only case of illegal flogging; but the justification of these excessive whippings was found in the pretended existence of *several* crimes in the helpless offenders.

On one occasion we were at our quarters, exercising in the various evolutions of war; now at our guns, and then going through the forms of boarding an enemy; now running aloft, as if in the act of cutting down our enemy's rigging, and then rushing below, as if to board her, firing our pistols, stabbing with our boarding-pikes, and cutting on all sides with our cutlasses. In the midst of this excitement, the movements of one of the men not happening to please the captain, he seized a cutlass and struck him a tremendous blow with its flat side; heated with passion, he let it glance as he struck, and the edge, entering the man's back, made a deep flesh wound, which was very sore a long time. Some of our men swore that if they had been the sufferer, they would have shot the captain dead on the spot! Are men of such brutal tempers fit to command a man-of-war? Is it not wonderful that mutiny is so rare under such a discipline? Such an officer might do to command a crew of pirates, but not of freemen, such as Americans feel proud to entrust with the keeping of their national honor on the deep."

EFFECT OF PUNISHMENT.—"Visions of many an old fire-side, of many a humble hearth-stone, poor, but precious, flitted across the visions of our crew that night. Hardships, severe discipline, were for the time forgotten in the dreams of hope. Would that I could say that every thing in every mind was thus absorbed in pleasure! There were minds that writhed under what is never forgotten. Like the scar, that time may heal, but not remove, the flogged man forgets not that he has been degraded; the whip, when it scarred the flesh, went farther; it wounded the spirit; it struck the *man*; it begat a sense of degradation he must carry with him to his grave. We had many such on board our frigate; their laugh sounded empty, and sometimes their look became suddenly vacant in the midst of hilarity. *It was the whip entering the soul anew.*"

MORAL INFLUENCES OF WAR.—LYING.—Young Leech deserted; and of this act he says, "For this act of running away, I have never blamed myself; for the means by which it was effected, I have frequently done so. As the reader has seen, it was done at the expense of truth. I told several deliberate lies to the deceived boy in the boat. This is inexcusable; and the only palliation that can be afforded is, my want of religious instruction. I was not then a Christian. Still, the act of lying was an offence before God, and no man should purchase his liberty at the price of a lie. He who saves his life at the cost of offending God, pays dearly for the purchase. I am thankful I have since learned this lesson at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Of the sin of lying I thought nothing. I was a sailor, caring little for aught but present gratification. The beauty of truth I had never seen; the hatefulness of a lie I had never learned. Most gratefully do I acknowledge that Divine goodness, which has since effectually taught me both the one and the other.

Our ship was now surrounded with boats containing provisions of all descriptions. To our surprise, the Dartmouth men bought freely of every thing. Where they obtained their money, we could not imagine. We learned afterwards that their stock consisted of counterfeit coins, manufactured by the prisoners! It was well for them that our ship put to

sea before John Bull's peace officers received information of the fraud. What a school for every species of vice is opened by war! The corruptions and vices occasioned by the operation of this system, are beyond the power of the imagination to conceive."

Leech became religiously serious in Salem, Mass.; but those impressions were soon effaced by the influence of war-scenes. "Perhaps the great reason why these serious impressions were so transient, was because the company I kept was so unfavorable to their growth. Most of my time was spent about the shipping; among these were many privateers, the profanity of whose crews was such that it had passed into a proverb. It was usual to say to a gross swearer, 'You swear like a privateer's-man.' Religion could not flourish in an atmosphere tainted by their vices.

Once more in a man-of-war, my seriousness all vanished like mist before the sun. Alas, it was poor soil to nourish the seed of life! barren of every thing that related to purity, religion, and morality."

HOME INTELLIGENCE.

Our pages have lately been so much occupied either with an account of the London Convention, or with matters growing out of that movement, as to exclude regular reports of our ordinary operations at home; but we hardly need say, that they have for the most part held on their course with their usual success. It is no small matter to spread through the community, five or six thousand copies of a periodical every month on such a subject, besides all the tracts, and pamphlets, and volumes we are occasionally putting in circulation.

Besides our General Agent stationed at our Depository, we have only one lecturing agent in addition to our Corresponding Secretary, who lectures more or less every week, besides conducting the Society's correspondence, and superintending its publications. From Mr. Miller, we have received no recent report; and our Secretary, since his return from Europe, has been much more than usually engrossed with our general operations. Still he has visited Portsmouth, N. H., three lectures; Reading and Stoneham; South Reading, four lectures; Medford, two; Woburn, three; Lowell, three; Bedford, two; Dracut, and Wayland; Pepperell, two; Townsend, Groton and Leominster; Fitchburg, Mass., and New Ipswich, N. H., each two; Sudbury, two; Southborough, three; besides several in Boston, and some other places.

Our President, like his lamented predecessor, has continued his labors in the same department with much acceptance and success. We are not able to report the extent of these services; but we have heard of his lectures in Concord, N. H., in Windsor, Vt., in Haverhill and Ipswich, Mass., and in a variety of towns near Portsmouth, the place of his residence. Of several, the newspapers gave a pretty full and a very favorable account; but we have not the papers at hand to copy the reports they gave.

ORGANIZATIONS.—Of these, several have recently been formed; but we are not able now to give, as we have not received, a full account of them. In *South Reading*, we have a number of excellent friends. The venerable pastor of the Congregational Church (Rev. Reuben Emerson) began his labors in this cause more than twenty-five years ago, during the active services of Worcester, organized a branch of the Massachusetts Peace Society, and kept it in vigorous operation as long, probably, as any other in the land. His heart is with us still, and doubtless will be through life. In the Baptist minister, (Rev. Charles Evans), who knows more than most of us about war, from having visited the four quarters of the globe, and seen its dire results, we found a warm and active coadjutor, and men of kindred spirit in both the Congregational and Baptist societies. We should be glad to mention some names, especially one among our female